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ФИЛОСОФИЯ НА ПЕДАГОГИКАТА

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PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

EUROPEANISM AS A VALUE SYSTEM:  
A POTENTIAL INTERPRETATION

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**Abstract:** *Europeanism is the result of a two-and-a-half-thousand-year-old historical process. It has been guided by certain elements, such as ancient Greek democracy, Roman rules and laws, Judeo-Christian tradition, civic engagement, enterprise willingness and capabilities, humanism, national self-determination, and the virtues of dignity and respect for the individual. Europeanism has aspects which are not related to politics and economy but to morals and pedagogy (teaching, education). In this sense, we must analyze philosophical, ethical, and pedagogical correlations. In the author's opinion, Europeanism is a great invention that has made the individual's social role more important. Robert Musil, the most philosophical writer of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, wrote that the individual was nothing else but one's own primary performance. According to Milan Kundera, God has become Deus absconditus and humans have become the philosopher's stone. In this context, Europeanism signifies that the individual becomes what one makes of oneself. The author also thinks that the greatest challenges of pedagogy (from a theoretical and practical perspective) are: How can the ability and competence of independent thinking be realized during educational work?; How does the schooling system facilitate the development of the autonomy of pupils, students, and teachers? This is the most beautiful and charming quest of education.*

**Keywords:** *virtues; individual; autonomy; philosophy of education.*

Motto: "The existence of mankind orients towards values."

Eduard Spranger

### Introduction

As a starting point, the European Union does not simply mean a given economic integration or a community based on economic interests. It is neither a certain political block, nor a legal system. Furthermore, it cannot be considered only a geographical unity. Nevertheless, the community itself embraces all these aspects. In fact, one should see that the *European Union is a historical formation* which, regarding its deepest content, is a real and concrete phenomenon. Thus, it represents *a value system* that is not for or against economic considerations, but goes along with them.

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In connection with the approach based on values, one can think of the hundred-year-old idea of Eduard Spranger, namely that *the existence of mankind orients towards values* (Spranger 1920). It is undoubtedly true that humankind can exist along other principles as well (e.g. love, community, production, labour, communication). However, one cannot deny the fact that values themselves serve as a compass in terms of our thoughts and everyday endeavours.

If we are discussing values, our investigation on the EU must be extended beyond economic interests to historical, philosophical, ethical, religious, sociological, psychological, and pedagogical approaches. The aforementioned scientific labour and intellectual occupations convincingly show that our knowledge of the European Union should be viewed from a broader perspective, and that it is desirable and practical to get a deeper understanding of the EU. Based on this information, one can see that *the common value system of the EU can only be and is Europeanism*. Europeanism is the result of a two-and-a-half-thousand-year-old historical process, which has been guided by, as it is already known, certain elements, such as ancient Greek democracy, Roman rules and laws, Judeo-Christian tradition, humanism, rationalism, civic engagement, entrepreneurship, national self-determination, etc. Europe has created the world trade, global market, and thinking in terms of universal history, which is not marginal at all (in relation to the aspect of economic integration). When one is assessing the European Union, it should be done according to the principle of whether the EU preserves these values or not. To put it differently, when one wants to evaluate the ongoing processes and problems in the EU, it is important to focus on the extent to which the community of the EU serves or does not serve the above-mentioned values.

Thus, when one examines the European Union, it is not satisfactory to scrutinize phenomena through the lens of an economist. One should also unearth deeper historical processes and intellectual trends that are an organic part of culture, religious traditions, written and unwritten laws, behaviours, conscious and less conscious ideologies, and sometimes misconceptions. Last but not least, we should take into consideration virtues to which we commit ourselves consciously or instinctively, and which are *organic and unalienable parts of Europeanism*.

The following sections attempt to highlight and discuss in detail three manifestations of the value system of Europeanism: first, *Christian faith and religion*; second, *the dynamics and triumph of capital*; and third, *the virtues of dignity and respect for the individual*. Obviously, it would be justified to come up with further values, which would not be less important than the ones demonstrated in this study. Nevertheless, without the realization of these three values at the same time, there is no Europeanism.

## Results and Discussion

### Historical and Social Role of Christian Faith and Religion

Before discussing the value of Christianity, let me refer to the historical role of religions in a broader sense. It is a somewhat charming and solemn fact that religions (I consider the five world religions), for hundreds and even thousands of years, have been keeping millions of people in motion and making the course of their life a natural phenomenon (I would also say that people are enchanted by these religions). In other words, religion has become an organic component of culture, whether we like it or not. As Arnold Toynbee, a prestigious English historian and philosopher of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, argues, civilizations have their roots in religions, and they are the most important phenomena of history (Toynbee 1971). Centuries come and go; new social formations come and go; and science and technology develop. Nevertheless, it is not possible to make religions, especially religious traditions and feelings, cease to exist. It is also impossible to remove the need for the transcendent from the history of mankind, so one can consider this statement a basic truth.

As for the essence of the value of Christianity, I do not scrutinize it from a political perspective, especially from a contemporary one. For example, I do not wish to discuss the dilemma of whether the concept of Christianity should be removed from the preamble of the European Union's Constitution or not. A far more important and deeper historical correlation is at stake.

If one does not view Christianity from an ideological standpoint but from the perspective of its historical role, it is easy to conclude that it is a cultural phenomenon of exceptional significance. Christiani-

ty – let us just stick to its spread, institutionalization, customs, and rituals in Continental Europe – draws together various ethnicities in a particular manner who live in Europe. This religion and the Church *fulfil a historically integrative role in the lives of countries and nations*. The common religious conceptions, clergy, rituals and sermons make different nations, such as Italians, Spaniards, Germans, French, English, North Europeans, Slavs, Hungarians, etc. similar to one another. Although they are different groups of people, live in different territories, speak several different mother tongues, have different traditions, and live under various living conditions, they are similar in many aspects: they believe in the same one and only God; they usually follow the laws of the Church; the language of ceremonies is Latin; there is no significant difference in terms of the structure and content of religious and secular education; they build their churches in the same styles (Roman, Gothic, Renaissance, and so forth); and they hold their celebrations in the same way. Such evolutions and effects have contributed to the feeling of belonging together: common events happening to all of us, common intellect and knowledge. Such social events related to Christian history facilitate the evolution of integrative forces among nations, leading to a process of invigoration and unification. Thus, it is obvious that, in this respect, *Christianity means progress historically and has a positive social role*. It would be silly to deny or reduce its significance in this sense.

Let me mention an obvious Hungarian example of the positive historical values of Christianity: the historical significance of King Saint Stephen. Hungarians in that age had three options: 1) We should stick to the pagan beliefs, primitive tribal union and nomad lifestyle of our ancestors (see Koppány's endeavours). Koppány and his followers believed that Hungarians could live in the Carpathian basin in the same way as they used to live in the motherland Hungarians came from during the times of peregrination. Behind the idea and endeavour of preserving our ancestor's world, customs and worldview, there were actual supporting forces. Stephen declined this way and bore all the repercussions of waging a bloody war against his brother. If he had not made this decision, we would have suffered the destiny of other tribes in the steppe: we would have been wiped off the face of the earth (see the fate of Sarmatians, Scythians, Huns, etc.). It should not be forgotten that the lost battles at Merseburg and Augsburg were strong indications of the potential future of Hungarians. Ergo, not having changed at all could have had serious consequences; 2) The faith of Hungarians should be linked to the Byzantine Empire; we should become our allies. The Byzantine Empire was in its heyday in that period as it served as a global empire. If the adventurous and weakening Hungarians had received the protection of Constantinople, their existence would have been secured for several centuries. Géza had already sent ambassadors to Constantinople, which clearly illustrates that the possibility of such an alliance was in the air. As it is known, Stephen did not choose Constantinople in the end. Retrospectively, history justifies everything: The Byzantine capital fell in 1453, and the global empire collapsed, which would have also crushed the Hungarians. As we know, the Turks inflicted damage on the Hungarians, but they could not completely conquer Hungary (see the fragmentation of Hungary into three parts); 3) One should make Hungary join the developed West. We should adapt all their institutions and laws; let us be Christians! With this realization and historic deed, King Stephen inserted Hungary into the mainstream of Europe, into the nexus of civilized European states. Arguably, it has secured the long-term existence of Hungary. One could not emphasize the historical merit and positive social impact of his decision sufficiently, and one cannot be surprised by the fact that Hungary does not have any settlements without a street, public building, or institution named after him or a statue of him.

It can be seen that the acceptance and spread of Christianity played an important, progressive role in the history of Hungary. It should be acknowledged even if we are not believers or sense the contractions and negative social effects of Christianity and the Church. In a broader sense: it is incontestable that "Europe's foundations were built up and solidified by the expansion of the noble Christianity. Actions [...] take place in the inner sphere of Christianity. The clergy, priests, ascetics and mystics take over the education of people. [...] Christianity becomes the centrifugal force" (Patočka 2001: 131, 133).

The positivity of Christianity can be found in its inclusive nature. In theory, all groups of people are equal in its eyes, and its doors are open to everyone, regardless of their skin colour, language, homeland, family, occupation, social situation, or culture. They should only profess and follow the faith in God and inner guidance of love. The importance of love has been discussed by many people in various

ways. This study rather emphasizes the concept and significance of faith, but it does not deny the high importance of love in one's life (from a philosophical perspective, one could say that love is nothing else but the aspect that defines humankind the most; let us think of Saint Augustine and Pannenberg). What is the matter with faith which is one of the most general aspects of all religions? Paul the Apostle defines it as follows: "Now faith is assurance of things hoped for, a conviction of things not seen" (Bible, New Testament: 11, 239). Elaborating on the biblical quote above, I argue that *faith is essentially an inner force that provides absolute certainty about the unprovable*. And faith as such cannot be compared to anything; it is a marvellous spiritual phenomenon that keeps humans alive. As it is often said, *faith can move a mountain*. Without it, one can live, but it is not worth living. Life without faith is rather a one-dimensional, dry, boring, unexciting, and unintriguing form of existence. Essentially, it does not matter whom or what we believe in. The important thing is to find the particular thing, ideology, or person that can become the object of our faith. Faith motivates and consoles us. It can help us overcome difficulties and failures. It can also give meaning to our life. The Christian faith (and Church) encourages us to believe unconditionally in God. Its endeavour in that respect is extremely valuable and beneficial, and its positive effect can be sensed in many forms. It is a very honorary phenomenon.

Facing the less worthy and solemn aspects and problems of the history of Christian faith (and Church) is as important as acknowledging its progressive and beneficial historical role. Without analyzing particular themes in detail, I refer to a few of its cloudy and contradictory aspects which cannot really be explained. We know that the official goal of crusades differed from their actual aims. In fact, selfish interests or wealth motivated recruiters and participants. It is also a well-known fact that, in military campaigns, they were not afraid of sending children to war with the approval of the pope at the time. In other words, they sent masses of children to certain death. Hence, we can speak of a hypocritical manifestation of Western Christianity. Half the children sent to war did not survive the hardships of the long journey, and the rest of them died during a siege or were simply sold as slaves. The indignation is just: it was a display of shameful imprudence, an unforgivable crime!

The split in Western Christianity is a widely known story. The conflicts between Jesuits and Protestants can seem incomprehensible to many people. It is even more unacceptable that the tensions between the two religious factions resulted in publicly burning the books of the other. At the heart of both of them is the principle and virtue of love. Based on this principle, nothing justifies the act of throwing one another's books into the flames, because they were written from another perspective. These works did not spread violence and hate. They simply tried to see and interpret the phenomena of the world differently. Burning books meant erasing certain thoughts, and, along with wars, it is the biggest and most disgraceful crime against humanity. It is especially sad for me that such a meaningless spitefulness resulted in the destruction of the library in Sárospatak which contained *5 000 books*.

Last but not least, I would like to mention a problem in relation to faith. I referred to it above by stating how important faith is in a person's life. One can only agree with the fact that the Christian religion and Church promote religious life. Faith is an important part of civilization and Europeanism. The problem starts when the manifestation of faith is being limited to religion. The Catholic Church has such statements or implicit actions that imply that faith can only be in God, or at least that religious beliefs are considered superior. Nevertheless, such an interpretation is strongly contestable. It is possible that one develops a laic faith in terms of the most common domains of everyday life. There are some evident examples in this context. One is related to civic existence, and another to a particular profession. There are certain citizens who believe that humanity can avoid the outbreak of a third world war. However, they cannot prove their point, and it is not sure whether human history can avoid another world war. In spite of that, they believe in it. The more people do so, the bigger the chance is that we will avoid a potential war. One cannot underestimate the significance of such a faith; enormous forces are driven by faith. If these forces add up and become limitless, they can trigger an effect we have not thought of before. Secondly, let us take the example of a 'zealous' pedagogue. A teacher is not directly assured of the effectiveness of his/her job on a daily basis (not in the same way as other practitioners of other professions and vocations): the pupil might not be there 'intellectually'; the child might be daydreaming. The pedagogue's impact can manifest itself later in an indirect manner. Krisztián Grecsó, a contemporary Hungarian writer and

poet, articulates it beautifully and precisely: a real pedagogue has a *living oeuvre*. In general, one can say that a pedagogue will never get a direct reassurance of his/her work. Nevertheless, a teacher can believe that his/her educational work has meaning, significance, and effect. Faith keeps our whole life in intensive motion, strengthens our feeling of responsibility, and helps us overcome our failures.

It is obvious that both examples are laic and do not have any relation to faith in God, but they are as solemn and valuable as deeds in the name of God. If we take all aspects in this regard into account, negative moments (I could continue mentioning such things) do not blur the basic correlation that Christianity represents a value which cannot be replaced by anything else, and which can be professed without any second thought.

### **Dynamics and Triumph of Capital as the Focal Point of History**

It is incontestable that the European economy contains values which have an economic basis. It is in connection with the birth and nature of capital. The most important developments of modern history must be mentioned, which are nothing else but the birth of capitalist society and economy and their evolution into a global system. One can examine and reflect on capitalism in many ways.

Without providing an in-depth economic analysis of capitalism, one must recognize the most general characteristic of the mechanism of capital. According to my knowledge and convictions, the correlation in question was unearthed in the deepest and most valid manner by Marx. Before the reader gets shocked and paralyzed or at least surprised by my statement, I would like to emphasize that I do not wish to rehabilitate Marx's work anachronistically and nostalgically. I uttered such a statement after having correctly and moderately analyzed the topic. I know that Marx is not a popular author and many scholars and thinkers justly criticize his thoughts. In many cases, they would conceptually bury his lifework. To change one's opinion about Marx, let me refer to the argument of P. K. Liessmann, a contemporary Austrian philosopher, as an orientation point: "Not reading Marx is a stupidity. But reading Marx as we have been reading it is even a bigger one. [...] The failure of the existent socialism has [finally – K. S.] made it possible to read Marx liberated from the burden of reality; one simply reads him, as we have always should have been: as a theoretician, as a philosopher [therefore, not as a political actor and ideologist – K. S.] [...] Not only have the Eastern European revolutions freed people from Marxism but Marx as well. Finally, Marx can be read as non-Catholic Saint Thomas of Aquinas" (Liessmann 1992: 8–9).

If I had to summarize the essence of Marx's analysis of the capitalist mode of production in relation to our topic in the shortest way possible, I would highlight the following thought which might be less known or popular: capital constructs the needs above the ones needed for survival, and extra work becomes a general need. In parallel, "due to the rigorous discipline of capitalism experienced by the generations following one another, diligence becomes the general propriety of the newest generation. The diligence of individuals is limitless. [...] They become resourceful enough to produce new commodities to satisfy the needs of the society" (Marx 1972: 132, 219).

Capital has a huge civilizational impact: capital keeps productivity in motion. It does not let the production slow down. It surpasses all national limits, prejudices, old and obsolete lifestyle. It breaks all barriers which hinder the development of production. It establishes the general industrialization, the generality of social relations and competencies. Based on all these, – I shall highlight again – the global commerce and market have come into being, and thinking in terms of universal, global history has become general. *The competence and ability of the precise, disciplined, diligent and creative worker were born.* The differences based on birth, rank, class, profession, education, language, and nationality dissolved. In a sense, regardless of the above-mentioned criteria, anyone can become successful. In connection with these Marxist ideas, Iván Szelényi, a contemporary Hungarian sociologist, has an interesting remark. He argues in his new book that "although the intention of Marx with writing *The Capital* was to prove scientifically why capitalism must fail, he has proved why it is never going to fail" (Szelényi 2019: 219).

I would not like to elaborate on the argumentation of whether the capitalist world order will fail one day or not, but I am sure that the dreadful dynamics and charming triumph have a positive consequence: a unique historical progression. The capitalist mode of production has fundamentally changed the economy and society; what is more, capital made its own history an orientation point for universal

history. From the perspective of the capitalist world, history up until that moment could only manifest itself as local history. The capitalist economy and social order have reached global hegemony; and we have just arrived at one of the most important moments of Europeanism: “Europe has extended itself in all directions around the world. [...] The small Europe will become the ruler of the whole wide world. Being a European, a West European means being one of the rulers of the world. The small Europe blesses the world with civilisation” (Heller 1999: 27).

The Marxist conception can be considered in theory to be a simple 19<sup>th</sup>-century philosophical and economic document. It is a general description of the *nature* of capital that was valid in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. According to one of the conclusions in the famous work by Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of the West*: “The Western part of Europe constitutes a solid point. It sheds a glorious light on every historical event, their importance is measured from the perspective of Europe” (Spengler 1994: 42). Therefore, Europe is not simply a continent, but an extended global centre engulfing all elements of society, as Pagden wrote 80 years after the birth of Spengler’s work: “Europe did not simply extend its borders overseas but constructed itself by such an extension. Only Europe has the ‘Faustian power’ to form the world to its likeness” (Pagden 2020: 11, 14). It is important for us to see that such a ‘Faustian power’ is not guided only by economic conquest (obviously, it is intertwined with economic interests to a decisive extent). This Faustian power has a more durable and intensive effect. In other words, beyond the economic processes, it constitutes a universal and global phenomenon which is fundamentally different from its predecessors and encapsulates all spheres of society: a new superior form of cohabitation and cooperation called *Europeanism*.

Europeanism is *beyond* the *economic interests* generated by the rule and dynamics of capital, and it expresses a *social value*. Europeanism, not exclusively but with regard to its deepest meaning, represents a value system as well. As a result of capitalism and based on the nature of capitalist society – emphasized once again, – the citizen can get rid of the boundaries of the preceding historical periods (birth, language, religion, profession, and so forth). A new perspective of the world comes into being: the idea of liberty, conviction, and a noble creative force. The most European Hungarian writer, Sándor Márai, summarized it in the following witty manner: “the Western culture gives birth to the European citizen whose life is imbued with a particular conscience, feeling. One does not live for property, wealth or work in itself but for a given role: culture. The ideology of European culture is that it has a given quest. This quest is to plant the laws of conscience and faith into the souls of nations” (Márai 2000: 106). Then, he highlights a special kind of virtue: “judgement is primarily a European task: the task of Asia is to be zealous and fascinated, *the task of Europe is judgement and self-understanding*” (Márai 2000: 121, highlighted by me – K. S.).

It is obvious for me that new and superior general values are derived from the economic interests stemming from the nature of capital. I suppose that the way the EU functions and especially Europeanism express the raw interests and economic necessities originating from the universal production and growth of industrialization and from the value system of the feeling of being liberated from feudal constraints at the same time. From this perspective, the argument that Europeanism has a heroic and creative epoch that can fascinate people seems justified. In connection with this particular argument, one must turn to the Hungarian writer and sociologist György Konrád’s (who recently passed away) essay published in German: “What pulls Europe together? – the author poses the question – I can say without any hesitation that it is its symbolic culture which had come into existence several decades before the economic and political union of Europe” (Konrád 2004: 21). Beyond economic interests, one can mention a certain kind of bonding force, value system and culture, which are obviously not the product of the European Union but of the former historical era (when capitalist society had become a global system). From this point of view, the enthusiasm of the Hungarian poet and writer Dezső Kosztolányi, who lived in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, is completely comprehensible: “Europe... you old, you rugged, you sacred, you solemn, you, the institutor of souls” (Kosztolányi 1971: 60).

I could only touch upon a few aspects, but one can now see now that Europeanism’s value system is superior and has a huge social impact on the world despite the fact that it is also based on economic interests. Nevertheless, if one wants to contemplate the phenomenon in its integrity – just like in the

case of Christianity, – it is inevitable to face the negative processes and irritating paradoxes that come up during the analysis. Let me raise the reader's attention to some particularly visible dysfunctionalities.

The feeling of belonging together in Europe and European identity are not as self-explanatory and stable as one could have supposed or expected. It seems that the value system we have been discussing above has lost some of its dignity! It is important for me to highlight the warning of Janos Gyurgyák, a contemporary Hungarian sociologist about the function of the EU, that its moral stretches far beyond and can be valid for entire Europe, the content of Europeanism: "The founding fathers of the European Union were fascinated by the idea and desire of *unification*, their successors are only trying to solve the every and practical problems of being together" (Gyurgyák 2018: 54). In the beginning, the conscience and feeling of unification undeniably brought along a certain momentum and motivation in terms of ongoing processes. Nowadays, this fervency seems to have faded away as new conflicts and old ones are being focused on, which results in long and sharp debates that drain all the attention and energy of the participants.

Furthermore, such a problem has occurred in terms of the viewpoints, which has caused disturbances in the relations of the member states, namely among the richer Western regions and the less wealthy and less developed Central and Eastern European regions. The feeling and policy of being divided seem to have gained momentum, and vice versa: the will and capacity to be unified seem to have weakened. The Slovenian researcher Aleš Debeljak's sensible, critical, and self-reflective statement is thought-provoking: "the EU started to see the *poor relative* instead of the enemy in the countries leaving behind their communist covers who have incomprehensibly big wishes and *childish imitations*. Post-communist elites are not motivated by rational decisions, but rather by some kind of totalizing ideology that the European Union is the *Land of Promise* and represents the resolution of all the tensions" (Debeljak 2006: 52, highlighted by me – K. S.). To simplify it: both the West and East should fight their instinctive attitudes, naïve conceptions, and comfortable behaviour. On the one hand, the Western member states should not regard the Eastern countries who are entering the EU as poor relatives (which is an extremely humiliating situation). On the other hand, Central and Eastern European countries should not chase mirages (which shows that they have given up on their dignity). Both parties are responsible for the formation of their relationship. Nevertheless, if one puts the responsibility on the scale, the West should take a bigger one. Even Sándor Márai saw this correlation (in his book *Európa elrablása [Kidnapping Europe]* which has now become a classical adaptation): "Why does the West – I am talking about the Continent – feel entitled to make me feel as if I was handicapped? They do not even have the intellectual or moral right to do anymore. Where is their intellectual or moral right that forces me to bow in front of them?" (Márai 1999: 85–86) The writer had written these lines long before the establishment of the European Union, but I think they are still valid. Let me refer to György Konrád's witty similitude in relation to sharing the responsibility: "Something big is beautiful, because it is big; something small is beautiful, because it is small. It is generally in that way. However, it is more common that greatness gets on the nerves of the big than smallness on the small" (Konrád 2004: 30).

I would like to mention another negative and maybe the most severe paradox which is directly related to economic interests. Although it is really imposing that capitalism has been working for centuries and that one can see the growth of productivity and the establishment of global commerce and the market, the uneven development based on these factors has not yet been solved. In the above-cited book by Debeljak, one can read a strong critical statement which has been disregarded. According to the author, the leaders of the Western member states are in fact working on "how they could preserve the inequality between the Western and Eastern parts of the world and are pretending to support the principle of equality (Debeljak 2006: 52). If we consider social equality, which does not mean that everyone is always equal in everything, we must admit that, many times, there is a contradiction between economic interests and social values. The Hungarian sociologist mentioning Iván Szelényi's reflection on Thomas Piketty's work *Capital in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* is justified: "Piketty has brought the traditional topic of social researchers back to the table: inequality" (Szelényi 2019: 195). I would like to mention that it would be worth reflecting on the following questions: When a Western capitalist multinational company invests in East Central Europe, is the profit of the company capable of covering the pay equity and proper working con-

ditions? Is operating a Western European company in Central Europe increasing or decreasing inequality among Western and Eastern countries? Or do they only want to realize a modern-age colonization? I am sure that such a dilemma poses a great challenge to politics, economy, and other disciplines as well.

### **Respect for and Dignity of the Individual as the Most Beautiful Aspects of Europeanism**

In the above-mentioned sections, the concepts of virtue, moral, responsibility, diligence, etc. have been mentioned, but I have not discussed them one by one. Fortunately, Europeanism has aspects which are not related to the spheres of politics and economy but to virtue and pedagogy. In that sense, we must analyze ethical and pedagogical correlations.

The greatest invention of European development and Europeanism beyond religious, political, and economic evolution is that the individual's social role has become more important. In other words, it is the historical *debut* of the individuum. The latter's general respect and dignity came into being in a way that had not been experienced before. What does it mean? The most philosophical writer of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Robert Musil, briefly summarizes it: on this level of civilization, "the individual is nothing else but one's own primary performance" (Musil 2000: 61). In modern European civilization, the individuum has occurred as the autonomous, virtuous, and responsible citizen possessing several skills, abilities, and competences. The individuum who chooses and professes his/her own life and who believes in his/her own willpower and future comes into being. "God has become Deus absconditus – claims Milan Kundera, – humans have become the philosopher's stone" (Kundera 1992: 177). In this matter, Europeanism signifies that *the individuum becomes what one makes oneself become*.

Emphasizing once more, the European Union and Europeanism express a deeper contact and a more general value system than what a political and economic integration can mean. The thought and aim of the individuum as a citizen are articulated, and his/her everyday struggle commences. The implementation of such an ideology and its practice, or at least the attempt to put it into practice, give a moral starting point and content to the development process of Europeanism. Such general and important values, moral principles and virtue come to the fore, as well as the liberty of the individual, his/her autonomy, the faith in his/her own existence and power, the need of and struggle for his/her own dignity, the respect for other individuals and the tolerance of other social groups, states, and nations; last but not least, the ability and competence of self-criticism. György Konrád grasps this correlation precisely: "Europe is [...] where the most important value is the personal human dignity [...] where the liberty of thought, expression [...] prevails, where patriotism is contradictory to the interest of the whole continent [...] where the liberty of the individual cannot be violated, where the dignity of life is the alpha and omega of value judgement [...], where nobody can rule over the other, [...] Europe is at first in being able to criticise itself" (Konrád 2004: 82–83, 274, 342, 384).

A solemn value is being articulated on the author's side. Although not everyone would accept the standpoint of the author, namely that the protection of the individuum's dignity is the most important value of Europeanism, one can be certain that the value based on the respect for the individual is as important as the progressive religious tolerance or dynamics of the capital in the history of Europe. If it is true (Why would one contest such an argument? One will become more convinced about it if one reads the contemporary Hungarian philosopher Tamás Barcsi's book [Barcsi 2013: 399–301]), then one can easily admit that not only the history and theory of religion, economics, politics, and law are competent in the research of Europeanism, but also philosophy, ethics, and *pedagogy*.

In relation to pedagogy, I draw attention to the unfortunate situation that the connection between Europeanism and pedagogy has not been accentuated in Europe-oriented research and in the analysis of Europeanism. It was also disregarded by practical pedagogy and theory of education. It is an unfortunate fact that, seemingly, the aspect of education has been disregarded by researchers of Europe and Europeanism. Researchers on pedagogical theory and pedagogues have not seemingly realized yet how important the role is they could play in educating students towards Europeanism. In my opinion, sciences interested in the topic of Europeanism could liberate themselves of the aristocratic bias which devalues or at least attaches less importance to pedagogy as a science and practical pedagogy. In the other way around as well, pedagogical researchers and pedagogues should give up on their *comfortable* conception



that they do not have any task in relation to Europe and Europeanism, because history, political science, economics, and so forth fulfil it.

One can see and experience that the respect, dignity, and autonomy of the individual do not come into being on their own; one should *educate* children towards such values in a conscious and systematic way. The primary task and challenge of pedagogy are, although not exclusively, the independent and concentrated representation of the above-mentioned three values (and other values as well) and value system that lie in Europeanism. From this point of view, one can easily identify oneself with Patočka's argument, which seems brave at first glance, claiming that the essence of Europeanism in a broad sense is education (Patočka 2003: 12). To put it differently, Europeanism as a theoretical and practical framework for given values becomes the tutor and cradle of humans and humanity (Poszler 1989: 24, 54).

Let me briefly refer to a positive and a negative example of utilization of pedagogy in relation to the topic being discussed. 1) At the end of the 1990s, the French education policy and science of pedagogy raised the attention to the task of clarifying the relation of education to Europeanism. On this basis, they suggested the introduction of the term 'European dimensions.' Its main representative is Dominique Barthélemy, a French researcher and education politician who firmly stated: "When we are talking about Europe, we should think of the words *civilisation* and *value* [...]. The key term 'European dimensions' [...] is a method for teachers and their students to practise a difficult task: doubt, humbleness and tolerance" (Barthélemy 1999: 65, 93, highlighted by me – K. S.). The author's endeavour triggered a re-enactment which could even be felt in Hungarian pedagogical research. One can only agree with the thesis that the essence of Europeanism can only be examined on the level of values. What is more, the concrete values in relation to education should be integrated into all spheres of education. Sadly, the motion in the beginning has become less intense. In my opinion, the *independent, direct, and systematic* adaptation of such a value system in public education and higher education is still missing. 2) Without discussing the Hungarian education policy and pedagogy in detail, I would like to briefly refer to two recent publications, both of which discuss what difficulties and challenges our educational system and practical pedagogy have. Péter Radó, while philosophizing on the future of the school, draws our attention to the fact that "education towards citizenship cannot only be limited to [...] the 'ghetto' of civic education [...] Autocratic systems will become stupid, if the state and public political discourse become stupid" (Radó 2017: 69, 159). The harsh criticism continues in János Szüdi's book: "the idea of the state which solves everything is part of the public thinking. Why would pedagogues think something else if they did not learn about [...] the essence of the democratic state, fundamental human rights and *European values* (Szüdi 2019: 177, highlighted by me – K. S.). The last two negative remarks can be an exaggeration, but it is obvious that there are a lot of things to do in order to clarify certain questions. For example, how does the schooling system facilitate the development of the autonomy of pupils, students, and pedagogues? Or is it the other way around? Does it undermine autonomy? How can the ability and competence of independent thinking be realized during educational work? It is incontestable that the most important tasks of education are making children autonomous and respect the dignity of the individual. According to my conception, the latter is its most beautiful and charming quest.

Let us get back to the respect for the individual's dignity (not solely touching upon its pedagogical aspects), more precisely to the dilemma that such a positive European value has some negative sides. Many important issues could be mentioned, but I focus on two questions that reach beyond the value system of Europeanism. One of them concerns the global commercial, political, and ecological crisis, while the other one is related to negative effects stemming from the digital society. In connection with the former problem, one should analyze the reflections of Tibor Szabó, a famous Hungarian representative of applied philosophy: "There are several threats to human existence on the Earth [...] which warn us more and more intensively that the planet cannot be exploited limitlessly [...]. Instability has become persistent [...] in the age of economic and ecological crisis, instability reigned (and is still reigning) over the everyday life of human beings and international relations" (Szabó 2014: 217–218). According to these statements, we are facing an enormous global problem that pushes humanity towards an era where instability is not a minor side effect among many other characteristics but the main and most important characteristic feature that determines everything. We have reached another era called *age of instability*,

when humans wage the bloodiest war against one another for crude oil, water, cleaner air, fertile land, religious faith, preservation or destruction of Western (and European) values. Undoubtedly, under such political, economic, and environmental circumstances, partly triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic, *the situation and security of the individuum has been shaken*; individuals can be traumatized, and their existence can become insecure. Relating it to our topic: the beautiful principle, virtue and value of the respect and dignity of the individuum, *it becomes less and less important and charming*.

Furthermore, we are also facing a new and grave danger when we consider the universal reign of the digital society. The application of digital tools brings along many novelties in all aspects of life. Its positive effects can be felt on a daily basis among the youth. It is historical experience that all important scientific and technological inventions cause conflicts and paradoxes. Overcoming such negative repercussions can hinder the evolution of the normal and natural adaptation of human beings. In some cases, it makes such an adaptation completely impossible. One can experience various worrisome processes. The digitized world considerably affects the state of mind. The Hungarian philosopher Miklós Almási summarizes the problem in the following manner: “the other as a person is gradually disappearing. On Facebook and Twitter, we are surrounded by followers. In others words, by unknown figures who are around me, but as they are not actual human beings, they are unable to reflect on me, so my personality cannot develop. [...] the more followers one has the lesser chance one has to develop a socially integrated personality. One gets excluded from the real world and becomes the citizen of an alternative reality. The social nature of the individual is shaken. The individual as such has not completely disappeared, but the threads leading from the self to the other have been considerably weakened” (Almási 2019: 22–23). Social media, smartphones, and other gadgets do not see individuals but mere data. They count on *creatures stripped of their intellect and emotions who do not live in the actual reality but in a parallel virtual universe, in the omnipotence of the online world*. If we consider that the machinery of the digital society penetrates the private sphere and paves the way for shady businesses, sexual and aggressive instincts, it is superfluous to prove that we are distancing ourselves from the respect, dignity, and autonomy of the individual.

## Conclusion

We will philosophize and argue a lot about the essence of Europeanism. Regardless of the way one elaborates on the topic, we can be certain that the desired and needed cooperation can only be established along common values.

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